

A Book Review on
Brothers, We Are Not Professionals

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Synopsis

Piper, John. *Brothers, We Are Not Professionals: A Plea to Pastors for Radical Ministry*.
Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2002.

John Piper's work, *Brothers, We Are Not Professionals*, is a calling for pastors to return to their roots in the prophetic aspect of pastoral ministry while forsaking the professionalism that has infiltrated and destroyed the ministry. Piper takes fellow ministers through thirty concise topics on pastoral ministry, beginning each chapter with the warm tone of "brothers". The discussion has the feeling of one sitting down to dinner with Piper and absorbing the wisdom this dear brother in the Lord has experienced in his years of pastoral ministry.

Piper holds no major topics off limits as he engages in discussions ranging from the love and glory of God to prayer, Christian hedonism, studying the biblical languages, Bible study, repentance, baptism, missions, racism, the unborn, worship, and even praying for seminaries. It would be difficult to discern a major aspect of pastoral ministry not covered by Piper's work. Piper covers practically every major aspect of pastoral ministry in a concise yet rich format.

Pastors reading Piper's work will receive a well-rounded and balanced treatment of both the public and private elements of the pastor's ministry. Piper offers wisdom on preaching justification by faith, the correct response to serving God, the truth of Hell, biblical repentance, and comfort during calamity. He also touches on areas in which ministers must grow in their private lives by reclaiming the time desperately needed to spend in reading and studying books and the Scriptures, reading Christian biography, as well as prayer, the study of the biblical languages, even to how a pastor should love his wife and how to retain a spirit of humility in ministry. Piper also covers church issues such as worship, missions, salvation, church membership, and the dangers of ministry. He even touches on social issues concerning racism and the unborn.

Evaluation

Every pastor and student of ministry should read Piper's classic, *Brothers, We Are Not Professionals*. The wisdom in this work is desperately needed in a society where ministry has fallen into the pitfall of professionalism. Pastors need the strong wake up call Piper presents in this work to turn the tide of ministry back to its original roots of men of God engaged in the ministry of God. As pastors have transformed into becoming church executives and churches have transformed into commercialism, Piper's work speaks volumes of timely wisdom for every minister of today.

Piper's warm and loving tone throughout the work is concise, digestible, and rich. It is a gold mine of wisdom from an experienced man of God and brother in the Lord. Piper forgoes the academic and technical approach of ministry to the practical and personal discussion of what the Lord seeks in a pastor. This work touches the spirit and transforms the heart. It molds and shapes the pastor to be more like Christ.

The wealth of wisdom Piper offers to pastors concerning preaching is alone worth reading this work. Piper's treatment on the glory and love of God lay the foundation upon which Piper builds additional wisdom and insight concerning preaching. The discussions on preaching justification by faith, the proper form of serving God, salvation, Hell, and repentance are desperately needed to be proclaimed from the pulpit. Piper's wisdom on the comfort during calamity is extremely relevant for a hurting modern society.

The church issues covered in Piper's work are also vital topics of importance for the minister to engage in Piper's wisdom and experience. His discussions on missions, baptism, church membership, and the dangers of ministry puts ministry into its proper perspective to strengthen and encourage pastors in this difficult yet rewarding task. His wisdom is abundantly practical for every pastor needing encouragement to continue this blessed journey.

Pastors reading Piper's work will also grow personally to greater spiritual maturity through their encounter with this volume. Piper's rich wisdom on the learning of biblical

languages, reclaiming the precious time needed in reading and studying books and the Scriptures, reading Christian biography, in-depth Bible study, and retaining a spirit of humility is crucial for pastors to experience the Lord's definition of success, not the world's definition of success, concerning ministry.

Additionally, the social issues touched on in Piper's work are of great need for pastors to encounter. Piper's discussions on racism and the unborn are especially timely in this age, possibly even more timely today than when the work was originally written. Pastors need to be the light that shines forth on these two major social issues, and Piper outlines the wisdom and practicalities needed for pastors to tackle these social issues firmly in their ministry while continuing their focus on the salvation of the lost and expository preaching.

While the majority of Piper's work was biblically solid and beautifully written, a few areas have left one scratching one's head or needing to perform additional in-depth study to determine if Piper's views on such subjects are properly biblical. One such area was Piper's discussion on Christian hedonism, which was somewhat confusing and needs further clarification on how such a view aligns with Scripture. Piper's discussion on worship also felt somewhat shifting in his viewpoint on worship and could have been a stronger overall discussion concerning what Piper actually believes concerning worship. Additionally, some of Piper's reformed and Calvinistic views concerning soteriology surfaced throughout portions of this work, in which non-Calvinistic readers need to take caution of when encountering them. Non-Calvinistic readers will disagree with some of Piper's views on salvation, although he did keep the Calvinistic discussion at a minimum and employed a more holistic discussion of the pastor's role in pastoral ministry without venturing far off the main road.

Pastors will gain a deeper appreciation of biblical exposition, as well as pastoral ministry and a pastor's private life upon encountering Piper's work. Piper clarifies the goals of biblical exposition well in his writings, as well as offers an end-to-end approach to pastoral ministry that one will not find in other works, especially in such an overall clear and concise manner. Pastors who ponder over Piper's work will become more effective preachers, more mature Christians,

more effective ministers, and stronger leaders in the challenging tasks and field the Lord has called them into.

While the future ministry of the reviewer of this work is in more of a biblical academic field versus a practical ministry pastoral role, the wisdom from Piper's work applies to anyone in any ministry field. Regardless if one communicates the Word of God from the pulpit or in the classroom, Piper's principles of biblical exposition are needed for anyone who wishes to communicate the truths of the Word of God to the people of God. The areas of personal growth and maturity outlined in Piper's work are needed for everyone in ministry in order to remain lifelong students of the Word of God and biblical studies and to retain a spirit of humility through the monumental task the Lord has called those in the ministry to accomplish.

The encouragement from Piper to pray for seminaries is vastly needed to strengthen and encourage professors and students to grow in spiritual maturity and to produce the next generation of Christian leaders. Piper's treatment on missions reminds seminarians and ministers of the overwhelming task of fulfilling the Great Commission while also stirring up the excitement and honor to be involved in this blessed endeavor. The discussions on social issues are as relevant for the biblical academic as they are for the full-time pastor, as the biblical academic can utilize the God-given gifts of academic writing to tackle these issues directly. The wisdom presented in church issues allow professors and students to form a foundation of effective church leadership and a sound biblical approach to pastoral ministry even before these future pastors enter the ministry field.

Piper's work remains a classic for everyone involved in ministry to reclaim pastoral ministry from the professionalism of the world back to the prophetic calling of the Word of God as men of God who communicate the truth of God to the people of God. It is a resource that will benefit both seasoned pastors and seminary students preparing for ministry for generations to come, and it is a work that should be on the bookshelves of anyone involved in ministry service. Such a resource is timely needed in our ministries today, yet timeless and needed for ministries for all generations.